

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 668

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BH

SUBJECT: NEW GOVERNMENT IN BELIZE

REF: BELIZE 650 (NOTAL)

1. LAST WEEK PREMIER PRICE COMPLETED PROCESS OF FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT. APPOINTMENTS TO NEW SENATE AND CABINET WERE ANNOUNCED, FOLLOWED BY OPENING SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 8.

2. NEW SENATE. BELIZE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT SIX SENATORS ARE TO BE APPOINTED FROM GOVERNMENT PARTY (PUP), TWO FROM OPPOSITION PARTY (UDP) AND ONE SELECTED JOINTLY BY PREMIER AND GOVERNOR. THIS ENABLES BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES TO TAKE CARE OF SOME OF THEIR DEFEATED CANDIDATES. IN THIS CATEGORY ARE NEW SENATORS SAID MUSA, ASSAD SHOMAN (BOTH PUP) AND KENNETH TILLET (UDP). ANOTHER NOTEWORTHY NEW SENATOR IS
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JESUS KEN (PUP). POST'S BIO FILES CONTAIN MATERIAL ON KEN

ASSOCIATING HIM WITH SUPPORTERS OF CASTRO IN CUBA, THE FAR IN GUATEMALA AND EARLY RADICAL ELEMENTS IN BELIZE.

3. NEW CABINET. ALTHOUGH MOSTLY A RESHUFFLE OF PREVIOUS CABINET, THE INCLUSION OF ASSAD SHOMAN AS THE NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING IS OF INTEREST AS IS THE APPOINTMENT OF FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL VERNON HARRISON (HARRY) COURTENAY AS MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO AND AMBASSADOR TO THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY.

4. COMMENT. SHOMAN APPOINTMENT ESPECIALLY NOTEWORTHY. GIVEN HIS AVOWED MARXIST ORIENTATION, HIS ELEVATION TO KEY ROLE IN SHAPING COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IS SEEN BY BELIZE BUSINESS AND BANKING COMMUNITY AS AN UNMISTAKABLE INDICATION THAT PRICE HAS NO INTENTION OF TRIMMING HIS SAILS OR ALTERING LEFTWARD COURSE SET FOR BELIZE BY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS. THAT PRICE, DESPITE SETBACK DEALT HIS PARTY BY BELIZEAN VOTERS IN OCTOBER 30 ELECTIONS, HAS GIVEN NOT ONLY A SENATE SEAT BUT TWO KEY CABINET PORTFOLIOS TO A CANDIDATE WHO HAD BEEN DECISIVELY DEFEATED AT THE POLLS IS PROBABLY AN ACCURATE MEASURE OF THE INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION WILL ENCOUNTER IN ITS EFFORTS TO HAVE ITS VIEWS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY NEW GOVERNMENT.

5. COMMENT ON ECONOMIC POLICY. BROAD RANGE OF UNREALISTIC PRICE CONTROLS ESTABLISHED BY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT UNLIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY MODIFIED. ALSO, CHANCES NOW APPEAR SLIGHT THAT ALIEN LAND HOLDING ACT WILL BE AMENDED TO MAKE INVESTMENT IN BELIZE LESS RISKY FOR FOREIGN CAPITAL, A NEED WHICH WAS BEGINNING TO BE RECOGNIZED BY THE MORE PRACTICAL, BUSINESS ORIENTED ELEMENTS IN PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, IN VIEW OF SHOMAN'S KNOWN ANTI-AMERICAN BIAS, HIS APPOINTMENT AUGURS ILL FOR POTENTIAL U.S. INVESTMENT IN BELIZE AS WELL AS FOR OTHER U.S. INTERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

6. MORE COMMENT. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CABINET POST FOR GOB'S AMBASSADOR TO CARICOM IS INDICATIVE OF PRICE'S GREAT EXPECTATION OF BENEFITS HE BELIEVES (OR AT LEAST CLAIMS TO BELIEVE) WILL FLOW FROM BELIZE'S ACCESSION TO CARICOM. IT MAY ALSO BE VIEWED BY SOME (THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE) AS A

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SIGNIFICANT NEW ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE.

7. FURTHER COMMENT. IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS FOR U.K./GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE CAN NOT, OF COURSE, BE AUTHORITATIVELY EVALUATED FROM HERE, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY GOG WILL FAIL TO NOTICE EITHER SHOMAN APPOINTMENT OR APPOINTMENT OF AN "AMBASSADOR" TO CARICOM. GAWF

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